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of a coffee house, the bulk of evening sociability takes place in private houses. There are several rather fixed groups of friends in the village who constantly interact with each other.

These evening gatherings may involve mostly gossip or small talk, but more often conversation is in addition to games. In one circle the most popular game is bridge, played according to Culbertson rules. Some years ago someone returned from America with the book. "Before that we had our own rules." The play is fast and skewed and also rather noisy. American technical terms such as "pass" and "no trump" are intermingled with Arabic numbers and suit-names. No money is ordinarily bet on these games. Pinochle is another popular card game, and there are many others.

Board-games are traditional in the area, and the most popular are backgammon (*tawli*) of which there are three versions, *dames* (essentially the same as checkers but with elaborations), and chess (*shitrang*) which seems to be played less than the others because the games are so slow.

Word-games are very popular also, and very frequently writing is an essential element in them. For example, someone will write a dozen or so letters in their unconnected forms in a row. The others are then asked to make sense out of what appears to be meaningless. The principles involved in such games are optical tricks (e.g., the series of unconnected letters—somewhat analogous to a row of unconnected script letters in English), puns, and obscure grammatical technicalities.

Of more interest and, sometimes, more emotional involvement, are poetry games such as the one called *qafa*. In this, contestant A recites a stanza or so of Classical Arabic poetry. Contestant B must then respond with a stanza which begins with the same letter that the first one ended with. A must then recite lines which begin with the last letter of B's. And so it goes until one of the contestants either repeats something which has been given before or cannot think of anything. Impromptu verses, provided they scan and rhyme properly, are legitimate. The writer once heard this game played at a rapid rate of speed for half an hour without a break.

In these small gatherings of close friends the two sexes intermingle freely and equally.

NIGHT LIFE IN THE CITY

Those villagers who live and work *away from* Mazraʿ in the winter maintain very *close* contact with each other. For example, in Ras Beirut, the fast-growing western section of the city where the American University is located, there is a tight little group of six or seven nuclear families, all headed by young adults, who, it was said, visit together as a group almost nightly. Each takes its regular turn playing host to the others. One member said he thought that their separation from the village brought them closer together than they would be otherwise. The group is known as "little Mazraʿ" to outside acquaintances, and it appears to have estab-